U.S. ARMY CHAPLAIN CENTER AND SCHOOL

# THE MORAL ASPECTS OF DECISION MAKING

21 NOVEMBER 1973

CH (MAJ) LAWRENCE E. HAWORTH

## INTRODUCTION

"A chaplain has rank without command."[1] This sentence has a profound influence on the role of the chaplain in the Army of today. However, it has an even more profound effect on the way many chaplains think of their role. For lacking command authority does not carry with it an implication of also lacking decision-making responsibility. The chaplain who is doing his job has a very strong and direct impact on the military community in every area of its life and mission. This impact is made in three ways: 1. Through the decisions he must make in relation to his own character; 2. in relation to his counseling, teaching, and pastoral care of all others within his sphere of ἐπιτροπος; and 3. in the influence he has in relation to those holding command authority.

---

1. AR 165-20, para 6.

I

It is of paramount importance that the chaplain first and foremost know and always remember who he is. The chaplain is a clergyman in uniform. His role pivots around the base of his religious faith, morals, and morale as effected by religion.[2] Whatever effect he has upon and within the military must stem from and be faithful to the highest sense of religious virtue and ethic. Whenever conflicts arise, and they often do, the resultant action must reflect a faithfulness to his sense of calling as a Man of God.

Personal considerations will often produce real conflict as to course of action. A desire for a career unblemished by mediocre OERs can cause conflict between what one ought to do in good conscience and what is expedient in being known as a "nice guy." The desire for remaining on active duty and keeping a good salary can cause conflict if speaking out against officially sanctioned immorality would jeopardize this security. The chaplain must make decisions effecting his personal life. This conflict must be resolved if the chaplain is to live with himself in good conscience. He cannot maintain a compromised conscience and still be the man of integrity that will provide the religious and ethical leadership needed in the Army.

The chaplain is a resource person in the military for establishing a base in ethics and morality. This resource is needed by those coming

---

1. AR 165-20

into the purview of the chaplain from the view of individuals needing counsel, standards effecting the community as a whole, and leaders exercising authority over this community.

## II

The chaplain must be the sort of religious and moral leader who obtains the respect of all the men and women of the Army. He must be able to approach people as individuals. He must be genuine, sincere, and a listener. He must set an example of being different in his person and actions. He must carry his own weight and operate more independently than other officers. His advice and life must be clear, unequivocal, and principled. He must know the Army so he can function professionally and so he can communicate with soldiers on their ground. He must help bridge gaps in communication. He must have backbone and convictions, love for humans; he must contribute morality in action.[1] Sometimes the chaplain must take risks; he must be willing to gamble his career in order to accomplish these characteristics. The chaplain will have real conflicts if his values are not lined up in this way.

In a word, every chaplain has to identify his personal philosophy of ministry in light of his religious beliefs. He must set his standards high. He must be flexible, but must know the point beyond which he cannot flex and there take a stand. This is the only way to resolve conflict in the decisions he will make effecting his own role and character.

---

1. MG DeWitt C. Smith, Jr., "Chaplain's Role in U.S. Army," Speech presented at Moral Leadership Training Conference luncheon at Fort Hamilton Officer's Open Mess, 24 October 1973.

## III

The chaplain is, to a large extent, a resource for guiding and implementing the personal development of individuals. He is looked to as teacher, counselor, example, and friend. The chaplains operating philosophy should be aimed at directing individuals toward the healing of their whole person physically, mentally, and spiritually. The chaplain "must often give immediate and careful attention to a particular dimension of personality, but he should exercise care to retain a whole person perspective and to remember the primacy of the spiritual dimension."[1]

A good standard operating philosophy is simply to keep the needs of the individual foremost in all dealings as clergymen in uniform. If the needs of the soldier are met he will be a better soldier. When his needs require reassignment or discharge, the unit and the Army will function better as these needs are met. When the needs of dependents are met the soldier will function better. This is not to say the mission is to be lost sight of. But the healing of persons ought to be, in the manner stated above, first in the efforts of the chaplain as clergyman and staff officer.

This is an area where the chaplain is often called upon to make

---

1. Donald F. Tweedie, Jr., The Christian and the Couch, Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1963, p. 227.

decisions. These decisions are not of the command sort but still have a far reaching effect on the lives of people. The chaplain is in a position where people will at times try to manipulate him for their own purposes. Commanders send men down to see the chaplain to "get the man squared away." Soldiers try to manipulate the chaplain to help him get out of the Army. Wives try to manipulate the chaplain to help their husbands do what they want rather than what is best for the marriage in the long run. The chaplain may even try to manipulate people in order to make him look good so he will receive a "top 5%" OER or a better assignment. Or he may, with good intention, manipulate a counselee in a certain direction "for his own good" when it is not really for anyone's good but that of satisfying the counselor's ego.

IV

In his dealings with the command structure in the military the chaplain should see himself as a guardian of the ethical base of all that is done that effects the mission as well as the lives concerned. This includes the lives of the men and dependents of the Army, those of the local nationals if a host country is concerned, and also those of the enemy if in a war time situation.

In dealing with the topic of the chaplain's relationship with the command a few words on ethics in the Army are relevant.

An ethical base is an absolute necessity for effective leadership in the Army of a democratic society. "Ethics is not indifferent to results, but it stands vigilant guard to watch over means. Ethics attempts to prevent contamination at the fountainhead of motivation; it forestalls the rupture of the intermediate stage of means; thus it is a sentinel which faithfully, although indirectly, protects end results."[1] It can be seen that ethics is not "unmilitary." There is plenty of room for ethics and concern for human needs in the mind of leadership. Mission and man are not antagonists but protagonists toward a tangible end of truly making the world secure and better.

In the military the fashion and basis of decision making is

---

1. CH (MAJ) Cloma A. Huffman, "Ethical Bases for Military Decisions," Military Review (August 1961), pp. 1-2.

essential as decisions effect the course of lives lost or saved. The security of whole cultures is at stake. Contrary to the civilian, the military community comes under the dominance of leadership and decisions twenty-four hours a day.[1]

> "An ethical base assists the military decision maker by providing standards with which he can measure the intrinsic or measured worth of the human factors, elements which actually dominate military effort from beginning to end. The ethical base helps the military leader to reconcile military goals with tangible material and intangible human values, and the essential problem which emerges is that of assigning proper priorities among mission, material, and men. The inviolable rule of sound decisions is that a solution must effect a functioning balance among these elements without generating a problem equal to or more serious than the original one."[2]

In their role as staff officers commanders often expect, and even demand, that chaplains be aggressive in their role as advisers as to the morals, morale, and needs (including spiritual) of the soldiers and dependents under their command.[3] Often the chaplain will encounter commanders who think they already know everything that a chaplain could have to offer outside of a preaching service. Normally, though, the commander is a man of character and integrity who is wise enough to know he does not know all the answers. In either case the chaplain must take the initiative and use great tact to impart guidance and advice on behalf of the people influenced by the decisions of his commander. On the other hand, he also must be a communicator to the people of the heart and intent of the command.

---

1. Ibid., p.2. 2. Ibid., p. 3.

3. MG DeWitt C. Smith, Jr., Speech for Moral Leadership Training Conference.

"Perhaps in our zeal for serving the individual soldier, as an individual, we have neglected to serve all soldiers collectively by paying attention to the formulation of policies, doctrines, and the effect of directives."[1] The chaplain who is doing his job will know his community. He will know the needs of the mission, the unit, and the people. Because of his specialized training and role he will know the impact of policies and decisions on the people. The chaplain, as staff officer, must make his expertise not only available, but known to the command.

The chaplain must insure that he does his homework carefully. He will exert influence in proportion to his aggressiveness, his knowledge of the situation, and his use of tact. The chaplain does have a heavy responsibility in decision making. He must be the sort of man who can handle this role. When a commander accepts the chaplain's advice he has a right to assume it is sound, well thought out, and morally impeccable. When a soldier comes to the chaplain for advice he must know that the man he is seeking out is a true man of God, really cares for him, and will decide and act only with his best interests in mind. The young wife or dependent child must relate to the chaplain knowing that here is a man who will help her make decisions effecting her family and personal life and that these decisions will be in her own interest. The congregant must come to worship knowing that the minister before him is a man of integrity and proclaims the Word consistent with the Godly lifestyle he leads daily.

The chaplain makes far-reaching decisions every day and must be fully conscious of this fact. His influence on command decisions may

---

1. Wilbur G. Peterson, "The Role of the Chaplain in the Decision Making Process," paper for Communicative Arts Program (March 1972), p. 9.

be indirect, but it is very real. His influence on individuals may profoundly alter the direction of their whole life. In every encounter with other persons, even in every encounter between himself and God, the chaplain must decide again and again what will be the impact of his life and ministry. He must gear every effort to that impact as his goal.

V

A final consideration is that chaplains often need help in defining their role, implementing it, or in simply accepting it. The chaplain's school can be of assistance. Chaplains newly entering on active duty must be educated positively as to how they should function in their roles as specified above. They should be provided interaction with chaplains already in the field brought in for this specific purpose on a two or three day TDY basis. Commanders should give their views on the chaplain's role, as is currently being done. But it should be in a much more positive manner and with plenty of time for honest interaction. This should also be provided more experianced chaplains in the advanced courses. The presentation by MG Groves on 7 September 1973[1] was a somewhat negative one. It made chaplains appear to be very poor staff officers as a rule. The OERs generally received by chaplains detracts from the credence of this generality. A better balanced sort of education must be provided by the chaplain's school in this regard also those departing USACHCS are likely to go to their next assignment with a less than positive attitude toward their new chaplain section which, in fact, may be doing a fine job.

A course in ethics or "The Chaplain and the Commander" in the advanced course would be useful. We are giving many hours to dealing

---

1. Ibid., MG Groves, p. 7.

with the individual, to administrative matters, and to conducting worship. But very little in dealing with the command except through an occasional one-way monologue by a general or a colonel at a dinner of some sort. Chaplains of six or eight years standing have many problems, experiences, and insights that should be shared for the benefit of all. The very senior chaplains have had many years of experiences with a variety of commanders. These experiences should be shared so as to give more junior chaplains a better base for their own decision making in how they relate to their commanders, both those above and below them in rank.

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


Barnard, Chester I., The Functions of the Executive, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1966.

Brody, Baruch A., Moral Rules and Particular Circumstances, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1970.

Casey, John, Morality and Moral Reasoning, London, Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1971.

Edel, Abraham, Method in Ethical Theory, Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1963.

Groves, R.H., "Presentation by Major General R.H. Groves, Division Engineer, USA Engineer Division, North Atlantic, to U.S. Army Chaplain School, Fort Hamilton, N.Y., 7 September 1973"

Huffman, Clyde A. CH (MAJ), USA, "Ethical Bases for Military Decisions," Military Review (August 1961).

Peterson, Wilbur G. CH (LTC), USA, "The Role of the Chaplain in the Decision Making Process," Student Paper for Communicative Arts Program (March 1972).

Smith, DeWitt C., Jr., MG, USA, "Chaplain's Role in U.S. Army," Speech presented at Moral Leadership Training Conference luncheon at Fort Hamilton Officer's Open Mess, 24 October 1973.

Tweedie, Donald F., Jr., The Christian and the Couch, Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1963.

AR 165-20, "Duties of Chaplains and Commanders' Responsibilities," U.S. Army publication, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., 22 August 1972.

TRADOC Cir 600-85, "Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Program," Headquarters United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Monroe, Virginia, 17 August 1973.

Veatch, Henry B., For an Ontology of Morals, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1971.

Williams, Bernard, Morality: An Introduction to Ethics, Torchbook Library Edition, New York, Harper and Row, 1972.